United Nations E/ICEF/2001/P/L.70

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
2 October 2001

Original: English

For action

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Second regular session 2001
10-14 December 2001
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Recommendation for funding for a short-duration country programme**

Multi-country programme for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States

Summary

The present document contains a recommendation for funding from regular resources and other resources for a multi-country programme for Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board approve the amount of $3,500,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and $5,000,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the year 2002.

The situation of children and women

1. Children and women in these 12 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States continue to be adversely affected by the economic and political transition of the past decade. Some common problems arise from policies shared prior to the transition, such as care of children in public institutions and limited parental involvement in children's health

* E/ICEF/2001/12.

** The figures provided in the present document are final and take into account unspent balances of programme cooperation at the end of 2000. They will be contained in the summary of recommendations for regular resources and other resources programmes for 2001 (E/ICEF/2001/P/L.73).

01-56091 (E) 261001

and education. New challenges include the increase in HIV/AIDS and substance abuse among young people, the multidimensional impact of poverty on children and families, and social exclusion based on ethnicity or other factors. There are many positive trends as well. Many of the goals set forth at the World Summit for Children have been achieved or show continued improvement. All the countries have ratified both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, each taking critical steps towards their implementation. In those countries aspiring to join the European Union, processes are under way to harmonize child-related legislation and policies. A range of civil society organizations (CSOs) have begun to address child rights as a priority and to support programmes and services for children.

2. Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have a combined population of around 201 million. While their gross domestic products have stabilized, and in the case of Belarus and the Russian Federation, began to grow during 2000, poverty remains widespread in these three countries. The Government of the Russian Federation estimated in early 2000 that 43 per cent of households had incomes below nationally determined subsistence levels. Rural households and families with children are among the most vulnerable. Funding of social services has fallen and social sector reforms, which have been supported in most countries by the World Bank, have so far been slow to make their effect felt.

3. Infant and under-five mortality rates continue to decline in all countries and are generally well below 25 per 1,000 live births. Immunization coverage remains high at over 90 per cent for polio, measles and combined diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus, with the exception of Belarus, Estonia and Latvia. No polio cases have been reported during the past two years, except in Bulgaria. The prevalence of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) remains widespread in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and persists in the Baltic States due to the lack of legislation and action to ensure universal availability of iodized salt. In the other countries, IDD is virtually eliminated. Both Belarus and Ukraine are experiencing a continuing deterioration in the health of children in Chernobyl-affected areas. Breastfeeding rates continue to increase at modest rates in most countries, supported by national policies and programmes, although a decline has been reported in the Russian Federation. The provision of pre-school services and enrolment have fallen in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, reflecting both economic constraints and a decreasing under-six year old population. In the other countries, pre-school programmes have steadily increased or stabilized, reaching 50 per cent or more children, although children in rural areas and minority groups such as the Roma are among the underserved.

4. Overall fertility levels have fallen below replacement levels in most countries. Maternal mortality ratios continue to decline in most of the countries, and are generally well below 30 per 100,000 live births, with the exception of Latvia and the Russian Federation, which are at 43 and 44, respectively (1998). Rates of maternal anaemia are high and increasing in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. According to the TRANSMONEE (monitoring the transition in Eastern Europe) database, abortion rates continue to decline in all countries, although rates are still over 100 per 100 live births in five of the countries. The share of births to single mothers under 20 years of age has generally increased since 1989.

5. Recognition that young people have special needs and priorities is growing, although comprehensive youth policies have yet to emerge. Rates of sexually transmitted diseases continue to rise in most of the countries, increasing vulnerability of young people to long-term fertility problems and HIV infection. In the Russian Federation, the number of registered HIV cases rose by more than 40 per cent between December 2000 and April 2001. While the epidemic has so far been mainly among young intravenous drug users in all the countries, in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, new infections are increasingly due to heterosexual transmission, and mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) rates are rising. Substance abuse continues to grow in all the countries. Youth unemployment rates are generally double national rates. The participation of young people in organized groups has declined, and there are limited opportunities for constructive leisure time activities.

6. The basic education gross enrolment rate (1998) is 89 per cent or higher in all the countries, and slight increases in general secondary school enrolments are also reported. However, an increasing number of children do not attend school regularly and do not complete basic education. A series of country studies by Save the Children Fund (United Kingdom), found that Roma children face discrimination, inadequate facilities and psychological testing systems which lead to the placement of a disproportionate number of young Roma children in special schools for children with mental handicaps. Due to cultural practices and early marriage, many Roma girls leave school before completing basic education.

7. Strikingly, in a decade when fertility rates have fallen sharply, the rates of children aged 0-3 years placed in infant homes increased in all countries except Hungary, which instituted a policy reform in the sector. The rates almost doubled in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. "Social orphans" (children whose parents voluntarily place them in care or whose parental rights are taken by the authorities) account for a significant part of the rise in the number of institutionalized children. Institutional care is also the primary care option for children with various types of physical, psychological and social problems. An estimated 1 million children are in public residential care institutions in the 12 countries.

8. Many children are in need of special protection. Children and young people from dysfunctional families, affected by domestic violence, family breakdown and substance abuse, make up much of the growing population of those living on the streets and who are particularly vulnerable to drug abuse, sexual exploitation and involvement in crime. Juvenile crime rates are high in most of the countries. While Lithuania has taken specific steps towards a comprehensive approach to the establishment of a juvenile justice system based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, similar efforts in other countries are still limited in scale and scope.

9. In Croatia, nearly 11 per cent of the country is strewn with landmines and unexploded ordnance, placing children at risk. The return of refugees and displaced persons in Croatia following the 1991-1995 conflict continues with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as lead agency. In the Russian Federation, thousands of children and women from the Chechen Republic have been displaced due to civil strife, with negative consequences for their physical and psychosocial well-being.

10. Women are affected by continuing economic uncertainties. Female unemployment has risen faster than male unemployment. Many women work in the education and health sectors, where salaries are low. Although statistical data are lacking, it is reported that domestic violence is on the rise, and protective legislation and support services are insufficient. Women's participation in public life, including national government, remains low and they are under-represented in senior government positions.

11. All countries have submitted initial reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In Lithuania and Poland, independent Ombudsmen for child rights have been appointed. This has also occurred in six regions of the Russian Federation. In other countries, different types of administrative arrangements to promote child rights are found. For example, Bulgaria, Croatia and Latvia have established national agencies to promote and protect child rights.

Programme cooperation, 2000-2001

12. The early childhood care and development (ECCD) programme continues to focus mainly on the promotion of universal salt iodization (USI) and on breastfeeding promotion. In Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, extensive advocacy activities have been carried out with salt producers, health authorities and legislators, but limited progress has been made to achieve USI. In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, advocacy resulted in steps towards enactment of legislation and other measures towards USI. Equipment provided to Bulgaria has enhanced the local availability of iodized salt.

13. Breastfeeding has been incorporated in the Russian Federation's national health policy, and promotion activities are being expanded to include all facilities where mothers and children receive care. Similar efforts are under way in the other countries through public information campaigns, training and policy review. To address the emerging problem of vertical transmission of the HIV virus, studies and training of health care professionals have been undertaken in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Ukraine is also participating in the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization.

14. In 2000, professionals from the 12 countries participated in a regional conference on "Children Deprived of Parental Care — Rights and Realities", sharing good practices towards the goal of reducing the number of children in institutional care. In Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, UNICEF supported the training of professionals, the development of local models of family-based alternative child care, and advocacy efforts for the inclusion of children with disabilities in community life. In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, UNICEF supported the collection of data and workshops on sexual exploitation and abuse of children, in support of national policy development. In Belarus, the training of professionals in juvenile justice, and in the Baltic States documentation of reforms in juvenile justice, were undertaken. UNICEF provided supplies for primary schools, supported landmine awareness, and assisted in health, water and sanitation activities undertaken by other United Nations agencies for children and women displaced from the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation through a Consolidated Appeal. In Croatia, mine awareness campaigns have been undertaken.

15. UNICEF is closely involved with United Nations HIV/AIDS theme groups and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) co-sponsors on young people's health and development. Training programmes for peer educators, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse through the media and in life skills education in school curricula, and encouraging opportunities for young people to be active partners as volunteers and counselors, were supported by UNICEF. Youth forums and parliaments have opened the way for dialogue between young people and decision makers and ensured them a voice in the preparation of the end-decade review reports in Belarus, Latvia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

16. The publication of the seventh MONEE report, "Young People in Changing Societies", received wide media coverage and was an opportunity to draw the attention of policy makers and planners to the issues confronting this group. This was complemented by national youth polls in each of the countries. As part of preparations for the United Nations Special Session on Children, UNICEF supported regional consultations for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), young people, Governments and CSOs, aiming to build a consensus around issues that affect children and youth and to identify further national actions required. Representatives from all 12 countries were active in these events. A majority of countries completed end-decade review reports for the United Nations Special Session on Children.

17. In Croatia and Ukraine, mayors' initiatives continue to promote child- and youth-friendly practices in cities. A web site for the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been established in the Russian Federation. In Croatia and in six pilot regions of the Russian Federation, UNICEF assisted in the establishment of ombudsmen's offices for child rights. Youth summits and parliaments, children's art competitions, film festivals and other media events help to keep attention on the Convention. UNICEF National Committees have been active partners in advocacy efforts for the Global Movement for Children, and in national efforts to promote the Convention. Child rights were included in the United Nations Common Country Assessment reports of Bulgaria and Latvia.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

18. The Convention on the Rights of the Child continues to provide a strong programme and advocacy framework. While knowledge of child rights' principles is increasing, it has yet to be translated into action to improve the everyday reality of vulnerable children's lives. As well as addressing decision makers, UNICEF advocacy needs to reach the general public, deepening their understanding of the rights, needs and potential of children and young people. The achievement of many of UNICEF programme objectives requires change in behaviour and attitudes at individual, family and community levels, necessitating a strengthened communications capacity.

19. UNICEF, together with national partners, has gained positive experience in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in demonstrating new approaches to enhancing services for children within the framework of the Convention. The systematic evaluation of these initiatives and the sharing of good practices at the national level are required to promote such approaches on a wider national scale. The experience in these countries, which combined practical work at the local level

with policy advocacy at the national level, showed the value of this approach, which requires clearly defined priorities and the availability of skilled and credible human resources.

20. In other countries, the promotion of greater national ownership through such steps as increasing national resource allocation for children and the adoption of clear policy and implementation plans for programme components requires further attention. Partnerships among United Nations agencies in programmes aimed at young people and HIV/AIDS prevention proved particularly useful in maximizing limited resources for shared strategic approaches, as has the alliance with the World Bank for influencing national policies for child-care reform. Building alliances between Governments and CSOs, including promoting social responsibility among the emerging private sector enterprises for children, remains a challenge.

Recommended programme cooperation, 2002

	Estimated annual expenditure (In thousands of United States dollars)
	Total
Regular resources	
Early childhood care and development	469
Child protection	574
Young people's health and development	644
Social mobilization for child rights	1 113
Cross-sectoral costs	700
Subtotal	**3 500**
Other resources	
Early childhood care and development	950
Child protection	1 225
Young people's health and development	2 100
Social mobilization for child rights	725
Subtotal	**5 000**
Total	**8 500**

Country programme preparation process

21. In Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the conclusions of the year 2000 annual reviews of the current programme, and the preparation of the end-decade review reports provided the basis for agreement with government partners on the strategic directions of the programme of cooperation proposed for the year 2002. In the other countries, the programme content is based on implementation of the 2000-2001 plans, the review of the end-decade review reports and the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as available, and consultation with national partners.

Country programme goals and objectives

22. The overall objective of UNICEF will continue to be the realization of the rights of children, young people and women in all of the countries. The programme will lead to: (a) increased understanding and public participation, including that of children and young people, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; (b) strengthened systems within Government to monitor and support the full implementation of the Convention; and (c) policy reforms and actions which aim at (i) improved caring practices for children and mothers through government and NGO support services; (ii) young people who are better informed about healthy lifestyles and HIV/AIDS prevention; (iii) reductions in the number of children entering public care, the promotion of family care alternative options, and increased opportunities for the reintegration of institutionalized children in society; (iv) the protection of children from abuse and exploitation; and (v) systems of juvenile justice, in conformity with the Convention.

Relation to national and international priorities

23. The framework of the multi-country programme is based on principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and on the "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century (E/ICEF/2000/13), and the medium-term strategic plan. The programme addresses issues and recommendations referred to in the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and to progress towards their achievement in subsequent national reporting to the Committee. The end-decade review reports submitted by the countries also outline national priorities, plans and programmes for addressing child rights and enhancing programmes for children.

Programme strategy

24. Building on the regional preparatory activities for the United Nations Special Session for Children, UNICEF will seek to strengthen new alliances between Government, civil society and NGOs, in joint actions for children. Young people's participation and fostering of social responsibility within the private sector are components of the strategy. Capacity-building among government agencies and NGOs to promote and protect child rights will continue through networking, technical support and policy research. Advocacy efforts aim to ensure that the children's agenda identified through the end-decade review reports and the United Nations Special Session on Children will be translated into action through incorporation into national plans and targets, which must be supported by resource allocations and legislative and policy reforms. Contingency planning and support for emergencies that may arise during the year will be incorporated within the programme framework.

25. Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have achieved the UNICEF threshold levels of gross national product per capita and under-five mortality rates as established by the UNICEF Executive Board (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1, decision 1997/18). At the end of the current programme, therefore, they will no longer be eligible for regular resources allocations. In these

countries, UNICEF will advocate for increased national resource mobilization to sustain and enhance activities undertaken by UNICEF during the past decade, promote alliances among Governments and civil society for child rights, and enhance national capacities to plan and monitor the situation of children. In the other six countries, UNICEF will prepare submissions to the Executive Board in 2002, in consultation with national partners.

26. **ECCD**. The programme aims to promote a good start in life for all children through advocacy for the implementation of legislative and policy reforms which promote breastfeeding. In Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, public awareness campaigns will help to create understanding of the importance of iodized salt. Strengthened monitoring of the incidence of IDD, combined with national and local advocacy, will promote the development of the necessary legal framework for USI. The effects of increasing rates of iron deficiency anaemia on children and mothers will be examined. Programmes which help parents to understand and fulfil their critical role in areas such as health and nutrition, cognitive and social stimulation, and the early detection of disabilities will be supported. Efforts to prevent MTCT of HIV will continue through training and awareness-creation among health staff, mothers' education and, in Belarus and Ukraine, the distribution of anti-retrovirals provided free of charge to UNICEF. UNICEF will continue its efforts to assist women and children in the areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine affected by the Chernobyl disaster, mainly through the promotion of primary health care.

27. **Child protection**. In Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the programme will continue to focus on children in public care through policy-related research and the promotion of alternative family-focused approaches, including preventive measures such as family support centres, day-care facilities and crisis care. Activities to support and protect high-risk groups of children, including street children, will be developed further. Dialogue with Governments on the development of the legal framework and the introduction of measures such as restorative justice and mediation for young people in conflict with the law will be pursued. In the other countries, UNICEF will also support national policy reforms aimed at the prevention of institutionalization of children, the development of family-focused alternatives, and the establishment of good standards of child care, networking and technical support.

28. **Young people's health and development**. The programme will continue to promote national policy development and activities which involve young people themselves in the design and implementation of information, education and community services that promote healthy lifestyles, particularly with regard to major threats such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy. Peer education activities and the incorporation of healthy lifestyles and reproductive health information in school curricula will be supported. UNICEF will support the networking of knowledge gained and sharing of best practices. In Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, an assessment of the special issues facing youth in rural areas, where almost 30 per cent of the population live, will be undertaken.

29. **Social mobilization for child rights**. Support will be provided for the preparation of national action plans based on the recommendations emerging from the United Nations Special Session on Children, based on a participatory process

involving Government, CSOs, youth organizations and the private sector. Advocacy and support for the establishment of ombudsmen for child rights, state agencies for child protection and the institutionalization of child rights monitoring will be a focus of attention in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. In Croatia, UNICEF will continue to provide technical expertise for social sector reforms. The experience of the Russian Federation with children's ombudsmen in six pilot regions will be documented and disseminated, and efforts to promote the idea will continue in Belarus and Ukraine. UNICEF will continue to support the publication of monitoring and technical publications of the International Child Development Centre in Florence, in collaboration with national statistical agencies.

30. **Cross-sectoral costs** will cover programme implementation costs that are not attributable to individual programmes, but are clearly linked to programme delivery, including support staff costs and other operational functions.

Monitoring and evaluation

31. Monitoring and evaluation are integrated into each programme and will involve improvement of disaggregated data collection and analysis for monitoring the situation of children and women. The TRANSMONEE database will continue to be developed as a component in the review of trends affecting children and women. In Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed for 2002, and an assessment of UNICEF cooperation in 2000-2002 will be undertaken. Based on data available from the year 2000 youth poll, selected indicators, such as knowledge on HIV/AIDS and the adoption of healthy lifestyles, may be considered.

Collaboration with partners

32. UNICEF will work primarily through government agencies, national and international NGOs, and United Nations partners. UNICEF works directly with UNAIDS co-sponsors in programming related to HIV/AIDS prevention, healthy lifestyles education and peer education. Collaboration with the World Bank will continue towards the deinstitutionalization of children as well as with ECPAT (Ending Child Prostitution and Trafficking) in national plan development on child sexual exploitation and abuse. Collaboration with WHO Europe, and the International Baby Food Action Network in nutrition policies and programmes that promote breastfeeding and micronutrient deficiencies, as well as collaboration with Kiwanis International, the United States Agency for International Development, the Micronutrient Initiative, the Programme Against Micronutrient Malnutrition and the European Salt Producers Association towards the USI goal, will continue. In countries with UNICEF National Committees, information exchange will continue.

Programme management

33. Programme management, coordination and operations capacity available in the UNICEF Area office in Moscow is shared with the three country offices in Kiev, Minsk and Moscow. UNICEF cooperation with Government and other partners is staff-intensive, and as noted above, the costs of staff to plan, manage and monitor

the programme will be covered under cross-sectoral costs. The emergency assistance programme in the Northern Caucasus region of the Russian Federation is carried out under the responsibility of the Area Representative, with a team of staff working both in Moscow and at field locations, and supported by the operations capacity of the Moscow office. In Belarus and Ukraine, UNICEF continues to share common premises and services with other United Nations agencies. Common premises facilitate the identification of opportunities for joint programme and advocacy activities and experience exchange. In the Russian Federation, the establishment of a United Nations House is currently under review.

34. Programme planning, implementation and reporting for the other countries will remain the responsibility of the Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and the Baltic States through collaboration with identified programme partners who are responsible for implementation. As part of cross-sectoral costs, a project officer and support staff will continue to manage and monitor programme activities.